THISTLE-DRIFT

JOHN VANCE CHENEY

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THISTLE-DRIFT

BY

JOHN VANCE CHENEY

All his rosy body bare
Ah! the Merry Rover 's there.

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TO ABBEY

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LOVE 'S EVER AT LOVE'S SIDE.

LOVE, you are in the hills,
And I am by the sea;
But, ah, I know my loved one thrills
With touch of love and me!
No need to tell her why;
Where she is, there am I.
Whether
Together
Or apart,
I fold you, Love,
I hold you, Love,
Hard to my heart.

Love! Love! Its tears and smiles
Wing wide as sun and rain;
It reckons not the hours or miles
For gift of joy or pain;

Love, you can have no thought
My heart shall answer not.
Whether
Together
Or apart,
I fold you, Love,
I hold you, Love,
Hard to my heart.

Love, you are far away,
But naught my heart shall care;
This place or that, go you or stay,
Where you are—I am there:
In spite of time or tide,
Love 's ever at love's side.
Whether
Together
Or apart,
I fold you, Love,
I hold you, Love,
Hard to my heart.

AND WHO IS SHE?

SHE lives, she lives up in the hills
Where mists and eagles are,
Blithe shepherdess of rocks and rills,
'Twixt mortal and a star.

So light no fairy foots it there,
With moonbeams on the green ;
You 'd swear her wee feet walk the air,
The hills and clouds between.

Of acorns is her necklace made,
And reddest berries found ;
While slender vines, in glossy braid,
Around her brow are bound.

And who is she ? Ah, by and by,
A-coming in her grace,

My airy fair, so light and shy—
They 'll see, they 'll see her face!

Ah, by and by, she 'll quit the hills,
Where mists and eagles are,
This shepherdess of rocks and rills,
'Twixt mortal and a star.

EDEN.

EASTWARD love's garden lay,
In Eden, long agone;
Eastward, lo, it lies to-day,
Before the gates of dawn.

It rests as still and fair
As the first lovers found it;
And the flowers are blooming there,
The waters winding round it.

The crystal fountains fill,
The golden glories play,
And the silver dews distill,
As on love's natal day.

Love's garden yonder is
Aglow with love's desire;

Thrilled by endless melodies
From love's own throats of fire.

Love's bower!—I know it well,
And thither lies my way;
On my soul I feel the spell,
I see the splendors play.

Lo, one awaits me there,
Wondrous as Adam knew;
Face and form as strangely fair,
And throbbing heart as true.

LOVE'S ENVOYS.

TO A. C.

ONE ember star reddens afar,
In ashes of the day ;
Love's envoys on their journey are
To her that 's far away.

The slow hours with their burden sweet,—
First fragrance of the year,—
Freely they 'll shed it at the feet
Of her my heart holds dear.

The voices of the cedarn boughs,
The soul-voice of the pine,—
They will but breathe the lover's vows,
Their passion will be mine.

The brook, whose true-love murmuring
Can know no other shore,
Will plead for him that sweet would sing,
Beside her evermore.

WHITHER?

WHITHER leads this pathway, little one?—
Good sir, I think it runs just on and on.

Whither leads this pathway, maiden fair?—
That path to town, sir; to the village square.

Whither leads this pathway, father old?—
Where but to yonder marbles white and cold!

THE WAY OF LIFE.

THE warrior frowned and pressed his temples gray ;
"Enough," he cried, "away with love—away !"

A boy from play by fondest kiss beguiled,
"Mother, I'll love thee ever !" spake the child.

A maiden gazed into the night sky wide,
"O I will love him when he comes !" she sighed.

The three moved on along the way of life :
A fair face lured the soldier from his strife,

Upon a tomb was carved the sweet child's name,
The lover to the maiden never came.

WHAT OF THE HEREAFTER?

BRIEF the stay of Sorrow,
To-day come, gone to-morrow;
Unwont fair Joy to bide
From morning until eventide.

Glories all are shifting,
Darkness is ever lifting:
The sun gives way to shade,
Returns anon—the shadows fade.

What of the Hereafter:
Will mourning follow laughter?
Heaven's stars roll through our night,
Will earth-gloom veil the Hills of Light?

THOUGHT-FALL.

WHEN south-winds are richest with fragrance of flowers,
And the still sweeter breath of the deep-forest bowers,

When the hill and the star have gone under cover,
To the dwelling of dreams, like loved one and lover;

When passionate earth has her will with the sky,
And the black clouds stop tho' the brooks go by,—

There 's a falling of thought, like the fall of the rain,
And the music of youth is playing again.

WHAT THE MUSE IS LIKE.

LIKE the love-bringing wind when it goes
To the deep-crimson heart of the rose,
Like the beauty that, languishing, lies
In the arms of the day when he dies,
Like mist at the morning's feet,
Distant music, transcendently sweet,—
Like these is the muse, but warier far,
And hers the uncertainest lovers that are.

THE MESSAGE.

IF only my breast had a window,
And you, Love, could look in to-day!
'Tis filled with golden gladness
Too bright for tongue to say.
But the birds in the air—they sing it,
Winging world over, they ring it, they ring it;
The bees in the blossom-bell—
They tell, they tell.

If only my breast had a window,
And my heart could fly out to-day,
'Twould bear you, Love, a message
Too sweet for tongue to say!
But the birds of the air—they 'll sing it,
Winging world over, will ring it, will ring it;

And bees in the blossom-bell—
They 'll tell, they 'll tell.

Can, can the bird tell, my belovèd,
The bee, can he tell it true;
Can sweetest voice of summer
Speak for me, Love, to *you?*
O my heart, it is running over!
Come to me quickly, my Lover—my Lover;
I love only love can tell
How well—how well!

HUNTER'S SONG.

WHEN the knowing robins build,
With love calls, all the day,
Then you 'll hear a ditty trilled—
Ho, Jenny 's calling, hie away !

Hark ! with rifle hanging high,
The ramping dogs chained home,
Now, my cabin, now, good by,
It 's ho, my Jenny, girl, I come !—

Mighty shy, your maiden's love,
Enough the faintest sound :
For every stream that runs above,
A thousand trickle underground.

First I 'll wound her—shame, the crime !—
Hang low, you pretty head :
Jenny, girl, the sweet wild thyme
Is sweeter for the hunter's tread.

HO, ALL LOVERS.

WHEN over field the grasses start,
Time! Let laggard lad be ready;
Then winter melts in the maiden breast—
Away, away to milady!

When robin 'gins his roundelay,
And the south wind comes a-wooing,
Then to it, Romeo, while you may;
Hey, be up and doing!

When sap goes top, and willows tip,
Then it is your wooer's weather:
Let each go sip at his Honey-lip,
Ho, all lovers—together!

YOUNG LOVE IS LORD.

IT is the fairies' time o' year,
Grim winter 's over, they are here;
Their finger-tips the alders tinge,
Rimming the runs with frailest fringe,
While willows, from their slumber shaken,
In leafy fountains playing, waken.

It is the fairies' time o' year,
The skies recede and mountains near;
Each shadow startles, as it passes,
The little peeping, wondering grasses;
The fays are busy: brown and gray,
Behold—they 're spirited away!

Young Love is lord o' earth and air,
And round him throng his brave and fair:

A quickening touch, a vital thrill,
Links field to field, and hill to hill;
With downward look, th' impassioned hours
Call softly to the coming flow'rs.

SPRING SONG.

INVISIBLE hands from summer lands
Have plucked the icicles, one by one;
And sly little fingers, reached down from the sun,
Lay hold on the tips of the grass in the sands.
And O, and O
Where is the snow!
The crow is calling,
Showers are falling.

Up, up and out of your garments gray,
Ho, willow and weed, each secret seed;
The music of waters is heard in the mead,
And surly old Winter has hied him away!
And O, and O
Where is the snow!
The snake is crawling,
Showers are falling.

LOVES OF LEAVES AND GRASSES.

THE little leaves, ah me,
Coquetting in the tree!
Swaying in the sunny weather,
Now, they steal together,
Now, flutter free, as fain
Never to kiss again.

Yon grass—there, too, I see
Suspicious gallantry:
Each spear unto his sweeting
Whispers a secret greeting,
Then primly, in the sun,
Smiles over what he's done.

Sweet spring-time in the tree,
In fields where grasses be !
So perfect is his vesture,
So pretty every gesture,
I ween no leaf or blade
But wins his dainty maid.

SONG OF THE GLOAMING.

THE toad has the road, the cricket sings,
The heavy beetle spreads her wings:
The bat is the rover,
No bee on the clover,
The day is over,
And evening come.

The brake is awake, the grass aglow,
The star above, the fly below:
The bat is the rover,
No bee on the clover,
The day is over,
And evening come.

The stream moves in dream, the low winds tune,
'Tis vespers at the shrine of June:
The bat is the rover,
No bee on the clover,
The day is over,
And evening come.

SUMMER RAIN.

FIRSTLINGS of the summer rain,
Tapping at my window-pane,
Welcome, little hearts of air,
Beating, beating, beating there.

Nay, look not so timid through,
Sure, the world 's at home to you :
Every lily, every rose,
Well your gentle knocking knows.—

Open, rose and lily cup,
Fill each passioned chalice up ;
Sweetly lovers from the sky
On the breasts of blossoms lie.

THE GOING OF AUTUMN.

I.

BLEAK the storm-mottled rock, and brittle the brake,
Plump-cropt is the cock, and denned is the snake;

Newly furred is the hare, the marmot 's abed,
Asleep is the bear, the lizard as dead;

There 's a howl on the hill, a moan on the plain,
A film on the rill, a flake on the rain;

There is death in the day, a treacherous sun,
A season grown gray—an Autumn undone.

II.

Autumn passes—she takes, to-day,
Her bleak and solitary way:
Old ocean feels it, on the sand
Reaching, reaching a parting hand.

As sings that bird where no eye sees,
Half-fearing its own melodies,
The brook, slow northward toward the snows,
Bubbling his little trouble, goes.

In naked woodlands of the vale,
A thousand voices utter wail;
Far on the mountain, high and bare,
A thousand voices answer there.

Lorn branches beckon, strained in space,
Death-pale the field's beseeching face;
Shrunk fruits drop sudden to the ground—
A gray shape waits on yonder mound.

SNOWFLAKES.

FALLING all the night-time,
Falling all the day,
Silent into silence,
From the far-away,—

Never came like glory
To the April leas,
Never summer blossoms
Thick and white as these.

Falling all the night-time,
Falling all the day,
Stilly as the spirits
Come from far away,—

Snowflakes, wingèd snowflakes,
Fancy, following, sees
Souls of flowers flutt'ring
Over winter leas.

SONG.

THE weasel thieves in silver suit,
The rabbit runs in gray;
And Pan takes up his frosty flute
To pipe the cold away.

The flocks are folded, boughs are bare,
The salmon take the sea;
And O my fair, would I somewhere
Might house my heart with thee!

TO YOUNGSTERS.

GOLDEN hair and eyes of blue—
What won't they do, what won't they do?
Eyes of blue and locks of gold—
My boy, you 'll learn before you 're old.
The gaitered foot, the taper waist—
Be not in haste, be not in haste;
Before your chin grows twenty spear,
My word for 't, youngster, they 'll appear.

Raven hair and eyes of night
Undo the boys (it serves 'em right);
Eyes of night and raven hair—
They 'll drive you, Hopeful, to despair.
The drooping curl, the downward glance—
They 're only waiting for the chance;

They 've never failed this thousand year,
At nick of time they 'll sure appear.

Shapely hands and arms of snow—
There 's nothing like them here below ;
Flexile wrists and fleckless hands—
The lass that has them understands.
The cheeks that blush, the lips that smile—
A little while, a little while—
Tease out the sprouts, sir, never fear,
Before you know it they 'll be here.

Hands, and hair, and lips, and eyes—
In these the tyro's danger lies.
You 'll meet them leagued, or one by one ;
In either case the mischief 's done.
A touch, a tress, a glance, a sigh,
And then, my boy, good by—good by !
God help you, youngster ! keep good cheer ;
Coax on your chin to twenty spear.

SHE KNOWS.

WHY this sighing
Of a summer night;
All this lonely smoking,
Somewhere out of sight,
This rhyming to a withered rose?
The cruellest of creatures
With crazing form and features—
She knows, she knows.

Who has done it?
Who has tamed the town;
Got each dude and yokel
On his marrows down?
Who rules and fools the village beaux?

A little dimpled elf,
Exceeding safe, herself—
She knows, she knows.

By and by, what;
(She has asked it, too)
Old devices failing,
Then what will she do?
She 'll find the strings—bring on the beaux:
The little angel sinner—
The very mischief 's in her—
She knows, she knows.

WOUNDED BIRDLINGS.

HOW is it, little lady mine,
That you in silence sit and pine?
Well in your teens, and have not heard
How worthless is a youngster's word!
Why, if he 'd meant it, kept it true,
It had been worse for both of you.

Aha, my stripling, sighing there,
And staring into empty air,
The rustle of a rustic gown
Will trap a fellow fresh from town!
Up, sir, for shame! let folly go,
And thank your stars she served you so.

Fall to, fall to, my pretty doves ;
Pin-feather fancies, callow loves—
My wounded birdlings, they remain
No more than rainbows after rain :
The soundest hearts at twenties two,
Your Cupid 's riddled through and through.

THE WAY OF IT.

THE wind is awake, little leaves, little leaves,
Heed not what he says—he deceives, he deceives:
Over and over
To the lowly clover
He has lisped the same love (and forgotten it, too)
That he 'll soon be lisping and pledging to you.

The boy is abroad, dainty maid, dainty maid,
Beware his soft words—I 'm afraid, I 'm afraid:
He 's said them before
Times many a score,
Ay, he died for a dozen, ere his beard pricked through,
As he 'll soon be dying, my pretty, for you.

The way of the boy is the way of the wind,
As light as the leaves is dainty maid-kind :
One to deceive
And one to believe—
That is the way of it, year to year,
But I know you will learn it too late, my dear.

ERE WINTER WEATHER.

ALL busy in the summer weather,
Two birds will build a nest together;
Will make it cosy, soft, and warm,
Safe from prowlers and the storm.

So, Fancy fair and Love, between 'em,
May make a greenwood home to screen 'em;
With little twigs and odds of thread
Snug may put the heart to bed.

But young birds fly ere winter weather,
While hearts would stick it out together:
A frost, a norther, ice, and snow—
Pretties, will you heed me? No.

SWALLOW AND FAIRY.

ALL the summer will a swallow
Flit yon eave-nest out and in;
Day and day together,
Twitt'ring in the sunny weather,
Flits she out and in:
But when the air gets sharp and thin,
And her ways the snowflakes follow,
Where 's the swallow—where 's the swallow?

So, Love's castle has a fairy,
Tripping, tripping, out and in;
Day and day together,
Singing in the sunny weather,
Trips she out and in:
But when the sober days begin,
Wolf to fight, and care to carry,
Where 's the fairy—where 's the fairy?

THE MERRY ROVER.

WHEN the mists are thinning,
And the day beginning,
Shyest of wild grasses
Whisper, as he passes;
Stillest thickets stir and sigh,
As he skims it lightly by:
Echoes call him, over—over:
All know the Merry Rover.

Soon as the birds sing roundelay,
He 's a-tripping on his way:
On the blossom-bank,
Where the weeds are rank,
And the thick air hot;
Where the winds can rifle not,

And the wild bee's work is wrought ;
Where the drowsy hours are caught,
And held in twine
Of herbs and berry-vine—
All his rosy body bare,
Ah, the Merry Rover 's there.

By the singing meadow-brook,
Loves he long to sit and look ;
On his hands his chin,
Laughing, leaning, looking in.

Where the squirrels frisk and banter,
And the changing rabbits canter,
As the leaves begin to wither,
Fall, and flutter hither, thither—
There, holding his rosy sides for laughter,
Runs the Merry Rover after.

Where the old, old shadows stay,
All the night and all the day,

Where the fireflies strike their spark,
'Gainst the hardness of the dark ;
Where gray silence, close beside him,
Helps the night to hide him—
There, must be, till peep o' sun,
Is his happy dreaming done.

By and by, my bonny dear,
Matters not what time o' year,
Matters not what hour o' day—
All the same to him,
Sweet Dimple-cheek, sweet Rosy-limb—
He 'll be coming up your way.
He will tell you where he 's been,
He will tell you what he 's seen,
And he 'll tell you something more,
Which you 'll never have heard before.

Ask me not, no, ask me not,
The Merry Rover—he will tell :
May he bring you happy lot—
He 's a-coming, fare you well !

THE HEART TRAP.

GAILY a moth is flitting, flitting,
Around my candle; (Heavens, the sin!)
Hours—hours I've spent here, breathless sitting,
To have it get a wee bit in.

The sweet, sweet bird outside my window—
Such oft in durance vile have died—
I might forget the pains I've been to
Would it but stick its head inside.

My moth, my bird, on airy visit,
A-flitting, flitting, here and yon!
Nay, neither moth nor bird, what is it?—
A little nearer, nearer—gone!

Ha, here 's my heart trap ; nice I 'll set it,
Put love bait !—hist ! 'T is coming now.
In? No—yes—*there !* I knew I 'd get it,
I knew I would somehow, somehow.

THE HAPPY CAPTIVE.

A GOLDEN cage, I 've heard,
Is just as cruel to the bird ;
But I, in close of golden hair,
Am happy captive there.

One dread is mine, but one ;
A finger-lift and—I 'm undone.
Dear golden bars, bend hard about ;
Oh, should she let me out !

MY LADY.

SHE 'LL not rely upon her dress,
To fabrics trust attractiveness ;
A native elegance will be
First sponsor for her quality.

Frail charms she will not lean upon,
Fading to-day, to-morrow gone ;
The fountains of inherent grace
Will well supply both form and face.

Yes, I shall know her by her mien,
My some-day sovereign, my queen :
Does she in me true subject see,
Straight queen and liegeman we will be.

ONLY TOO TRUE.

NO blushing daughter of the morn
Can vie with her of woman born ;
No face at windows of the spring
Is like a virgin's blossoming.

Betwixt the blue lids of the sky—
No orb, there, mates a maiden's eye ;
Not mighty Mars' unfailing lance
Can match the mischief of its glance.

Nature, how weak art thou to harm
As does a dear unsleevèd arm !
Thy rocks would trickle into sand
With tingles from a dimpled hand.

What swaying shapes of sun or shade
Approach the motions of a maid?
What snowy curve by winter traced,
Can take the taper of her waist?

And that soft darkness of her hair,
Thy twilight shades—ah, their despair
Not all the striving stars beguile
As may one memory of her smile.

That foolish lips should speak so wise,
Makes merriment from earth to skies.
Nay, Nature, drop a dewy tear
For solemn knowledge bought so dear.

MARGERY.

TELL you every feature
Of so sweet a creature!
What a fool I 'd be
To wake the whole world up to see
Pretty pretty Margery!

Blue eyes full of twinkles,
Hair in cutest krinkles,
Dimples—Cautiously!
I fear that you begin to see
Little witching Margery.

Well, then, tell me whether
Two rosebuds together
Could shape lips di-v——
But that is making much too free
With the charms of Margery.

Something of a notion
Of her brooky motion,
That were safe: her fee——
No, no; another word, ah me
And the end of Margery!

Such a throat! thereunder,
Why, the gods would wonder
As they gazed: a b——
Bless me, stop there, decidedly;
How she'd blush, would Margery!

DODGING THE GODLET.

RESTRING your golden bow,
The silver quiver fill;
You 'll hit too high, too low,
Young Rosy-cheeks—you will.

Look to your darts, my lad,
That dimpled arm prepare
Such mark was never had
Since arrow sped the air.

Your ringlets backward toss,
The silky wings lift free:—
Heaven, let no shadow cross
That shoulder's ivory!—

A very blind man's shot!
One side, too high, too low,
Too something—matters not.
She laughs: I told you so.

Once more; down on your knee.—
How warm his pink heels show,
Shell colors tremblingly
Thro' all his body glow!—

Once more, mine armèd elf—
Missed it! Go, godlet, go.
She 'll dodge old Death himself;
Put up the golden bow.

YOUR DIMPLED DEAR.

SHE 'S not for thought, your dimpled dear,
Philosophy is not her forte ;
But then, to corner her—I fear
You 'll find it solemn sport.
I 've learned by search somewhat severe,
That she 's extremely queer—
Your dimpled dear.

She 's ignorant, your dimpled dear,
Of Huxley, Lubbock, and all such ;
But I shall be upon my bier
Before I know as much.
Her grandam didn't, at ninety year.
She is extremely queer—
Your dimpled dear.

She 's tender, is your dimpled dear,
The very sweetest thing to rhyme ;

But 'tis a smile, and not a tear,
  At others' weeping-time.
Her sympathies get out of gear,
She's so extremely queer—
Your dimpled dear.

She's lonely, is your dimpled dear,
  She vows her dallying is done;
But—take my word—it will appear
  That you are not the one.
Why, she out-veers Miss Vere de Vere,
She's so exceeding queer—
Your dimpled dear.

She's plump and fair, your dimpled dear,
  Young, lonely, lovely, innocent.
O, will some Oedipus make clear
  For what the darling's meant,
Some Swedenborg please name her sphere,
She's so egregious queer—
Your dimpled dear!

LUELLA.

KATE 'S at her best in an apron,
Jinny 's bewitching by gas,
While Becky, in kitchen or parlor,
Is just the *ne plus* of a lass ;
But Katie and Jinny,
With Sadie and Minnie
And Becky and Bella,
Are not—not Luella.

Deb, in the choir of a Sunday,
Sings like a bird in the bough ;
Brisk Nan sits a saddle superbly,
And Betty 's a charmer, somehow ;
But Debby and Nanny,
And Betty and Annie,
And Edna and Stella,
Are not—not Luella.

Fan is a sylph in a bonnet,
Nett has her dozens undone;
Grave Addy would madden Adonis,
And Caddy is certain to stun;
But Fanny and Addy,
And Nettie and Caddy,
And Hetty and Della,
Are not—not Luella.

Clara—the turn of her ankle;
Dolly—her eyes and her smile!
And where is the match for Semantha
(Unless it be Molly) in style?
But Clara and Dolly,
Semantha and Molly,
And Esther and Ella,
Are not—not Luella.

Heavens, what a reign of all graces!
Each is a queen in her way;

And turning it over and over,
There 's only a word left to say :
Give me one and another
For this and the other,
But, O, for a "fellah"—
Luella ! Luella ! !

NATURE TO THE POET.

IT chanced, not many years ago,
Upon a throbbing morn in May,
Our Mother met a bard, I know,
And thus to him did gravely say:

"My little pallid son, I fear
You 'll die some years before your time;
They 're aptest things—the tape and shear,
To kill the rhymer and his rhyme.

"I 've told you oft the tailor bard
Is sure to cut his own life thread."
Then she put on so very hard
I dare not tell one half she said:

"Young winds, and mother winds with brood
Deep in the close of sober boughs;

Old winds that scale, in savage mood,
The dizzy cliffs where eagles house;

"Those choristers that first and last
Lead yearly chorals of the air—
Bold singers of the northern blast,
Opening their throats in forests bare;

"The pines which sorrow, unconsoled,
The owl in darkness of the hill,
The rattling hail when nights are cold,
The ringing rain when winds are still;

"The brook with tripping melody
To witch the feet of slowest shade;
The mountain torrent dashing free,
By neither rock nor forest stayed;

"Those minstrels shy with singing wings
Tuned, hour to hour, in tree and field—

The little joy the moment brings,
Their theme, in cunning lodge concealed;

"The bird which weaves the light of morn
Into the measures of his breast,
Which gurgles back the gladness born
Of dancing leaves about the nest,—

"These singers use nor tape nor shear,
Their shop roof is the high, blue sky:
I'll let you have another year
To rid you of the goose, and try."

This chanced, I've said, some years ago;
Our Mother trounced him with a will,
But somehow—how, I do not know—
Her little son is tailoring still.

WHAT SAY?

WITH twiddling quill we write, to-day,
That ink the page right *recherché;*
With kitten strokes, light here and there,
We urge the jingle *debonair,*
The Frenchy measurelets *au fœit.*

We prink instead of think, we play—
We builders of the little lay;
We pink the scented pages fair
With twiddling quill.

It 's very cruel, *oui, c'est vrai,*
To hint of harm to hearts so gay;
But *savez vous que* sleazy wear
Invites the time for going bare?
Le froid—confound the French!—let 's stay
The twiddling quill.

THE WISE PIPER.

WHEN other birds sing not,
Rifting the drip of rain,
The sparrow cheerily
Pipes up his little strain.

The measure wayward is,
Unstudied, I dare say;
But very sweet to hear
Upon a rainy day.

Fault with it might be found
Were the sky not quite so drear:
Bless you! he knows it well,
This little piper, here,—

I could a moral point,
  But it would hardly do:
Some ticklish bardlet—What?
  No, friend, no thought of *you*.

THE INFORMAL COURTIER.

COURTIER, in unpretending dress
Of all-excelling idleness,
No liegeman struts that can outshine
Me in this good old garb of mine.

Young whirlwinds alway ask me where
They turn round dances in the air;
And I am masker on the green
When fire-fly lanterns light the scene.

The squirrel, sharp in tooth and eye,
Salutes me as I saunter by;
Yes, ere the robin starts her nest
She asks which bough I think the best.

You 'll find me hid with bats at noon,
Abroad with owls at rise of moon;

With cant'ring hare and sleeky mole,
I am the same congenial soul.

I 'm free to count the hornet's rings,
The spots upon woodpecker wings ;
I take the breezes by the arm,
And tramp at will my neighbor's farm.

Courtier, in unpretending dress
Of all-excelling idleness,
Peerless, I serve, without a care,
Her Highness of the Open Air.

YOU, TOO.

BEE—bee—bee,
Happy in my apple blossoms,
Merry in my cherry blossoms,
Happy, merry make you,
And no tree-toad take you.

Bee—bee—bee,
Busy in the sunny hours,
Hidden in the honey bow'rs,
When I hear your singing,
Then I fear your stinging.

Bee—bee—bee,
Take my treasures, every one,
Bring me pleasures never one,
To my heart sweets strike you:
All the world is like you.

TO A TIP-UP.

SLIM, unbalanced bird,
A-tip upon the sands,
Here 's a friendly word,
A mental shaking-hands.

Ludicrous enough,
But not more so than I:
Of such teet'ring stuff
Is all mortality.

Man, as well as you,
Just bobs it on the brink:
Clap a bill on, too,
'Twould twin us in a wink.

TO TREE-CRICKETS.

I

YOU little pulsing voices heard
The warm, still evening long,
Must be there 's something, could I catch it,
In so persistent song.

The ring is of good legend gray,
As old as Adam's fall :
Be what it may, let 's have the whole o' 't,
The whole, or none at all.

A lusty tale, budding so well,
Should hurry to the blow ;
But you just keep beginning—'ginning,
And will no further go.

For reason good, you choose the time
When *Sol* is full of fire;
I know you, rogues—you throb with passion
Of some wee heart desire.

Fiddle the facts out, to the last;
I 'll stand by great and small,
Though they out-grizzle Granther Adam,
Poor Grannam Eve and all.

Bravo—bravo! I catch it, now:
What? "Love" so long ago!—
Yes, *I* believe; I didn't promise
For other folk, you know.

II.

Constant mites that briskly whip
One stave over and over,
How like you are, a-harping there,
The larger sort of lover!

Scratch-scratch—scratch-scratch, all the night,
You twang it, brave and cheery ;
One jerky stave, the whole night long—
Just, *Deary—Deary—Deary*.

High the moon rides, high and clear,
The filling dewdrops glisten ;
Thrum, plucky lovers ! well I know
Your little ladies listen.

Stick to 't, wooers ! So will I,
Nor ever slightest vary
The one sweet word of all the world—
Just, *Mary—Mary—Mary*.

BIRTHDAY FLOWERS.

OF those soul blossoms only found
Upon the poet's golden round,
What one will best become
The mistress of my home?
Some queenly rose of reason—
The rarest of the season,
Or lily fancy frail and white,
Or hope bud blushing into light?

So pondering, sought I far and wide,
Suing the muses to decide;
I searched love gardens thro',
But not a bloom would do.
Shapes exquisite in fashion,
Colors of chastest passion,
Invited praise; but none appeared
By quite the needful charm endeared.

If, mistress mine, I could not find
The gift I would, a heart so kind
Will see these trifles bear
My worship and despair;
Will make them hourly fairer,
Till they be (to the wearer)
The tenderest of baffled tho'ts—
Sweet little word forget-me-nots.

THE LOST SONG.

UPON a summer day,
I sang a little song ;
And something soft did say,—
"It won't, it won't go wrong."

I sang it high and clear,
Right cheery to the last ;
But freighted with a tear,
It down the summer passed.

I sang it brave and loud,
The tear quenched not its flame :
'T was caroled to the crowd
For long applause of fame.—

Now many years had gone,
The heralds went and came ;
Alas ! it was not on
The mighty winds of fame.

"Well, let it go," I said,
"The little idle song ;
The tear was foolish shed,
It did, it did go wrong."

Then, sweet, with love's own art,
A mother sang and smiled :
She 'd kept it in her heart
To sing it to my child.

THE SONG UNSUNG.

COULD I make mine the native skill
Of wood and stream and field,
The touch would not be sure enough
To bid my silence yield.
If nature might not, how shall art
Indite the wary strain
That, all the day and all the night,
Is ringing in my brain?

It is a secret melody,
A murmuring of tho't;
The breath of gentlest instrument
That woos, could win it not:
At sound of it the deftest hand
Would falter on the strings,
And Hope within the minstrel's breast,
Forever fold her wings.

Oft as its measures rise and fall,
I think to give it tongue ;
Alas, it is so sweet, so sweet,
It never can be sung !
No, never yet was singer's voice
Could catch this spirit air ;
But, O, my heart so wondrous clear
Hears every accent, there !

Dear melody ! were it set free,
Pleasure might turn to pain :
Perchance sent out upon the winds,
'Twould not come home again.
Safely imprisoned, may it bide,
And mute shall be my tongue.—
Poor heart, you hear a sweeter song
Than ever bard has sung.

AT THE HEARTHSIDE.

HIS children early laid away,
His hearthside bright and still,
The farmer's frowns are all that say
The day has brought him ill.

The mother slowly strokes her arms,
Unsleeved and plump and fair;
In vain you 'd try a hundred farms,
To find her equal there.

She softly nears the chimney nook
Before she ventures more:
So waters of a sunny brook
Do woo the moody shore.

If he, if he but lift his face—
The hearth flames quicken, spring ;
A yielding smile, his old embrace,
And wife and kettle sing.

AFTER THE COWS.

"HIGH time, high time the cows were home;
Will lingerin' Jenny never come?"
The father stroked his grizzly head;
The mother, slowly sewing, said,
"Put one and one together:
The bars slip hard in rainy weather."

"Now, mother, do you mean to say
We 've had a drop o' rain to-day?"
A little quicker passed the thread,
As quietly good mother said,
"Put one and one together:
The cows climb high in sunny weather."

"But busy Brindle with her bell,
(She knows the hour o' milkin' well,)

I 've often heerd her half a mile."
Good mother answered, with a smile,
" Put lad and lass together,
'T is love, not cows, in any weather."

THE KITCHEN CLOCK.

KNITTING is the maid o' the kitchen, Milly,
Doing nothing, sits the chore boy, Billy :
" Seconds reckoned,
Seconds reckoned ;
Every minute,
Sixty in it.
Milly, Billy,
Billy, Milly,
Tick-tock, tock-tick,
Nick-knock, knock-nick,
Knockety-nick, nickety-knock,"—
Goes the kitchen clock.

Closer to the fire is rosy Milly,
Every whit as close and cozy, Billy :
" Time 's a-flying,
Worth your trying ;

Pretty Milly—
Kiss her, Billy !
Milly, Billy,
Billy, Milly,
Tick-tock, tock-tick,
Now—now, quick—quick !
Knockety-nick, nickety-knock,"—
Goes the kitchen clock.

Something 's happened , very red is Milly,
Billy boy is looking very silly :
" Pretty misses,
Plenty kisses ;
Make it twenty,
Take a plenty.
Billy, Milly,
Milly, Billy,
Right-left, left-right,
That 's right, all right,

Knockety-nick, nickety-knock,"—
Goes the kitchen clock.

Weeks gone, still they 're sitting, Milly, Billy ;
O, the winter winds are wondrous chilly !
" Winter weather,
Close together ;
Wouldn't tarry,
Better marry.
Milly, Billy,
Billy, Milly,
Two-one, one-two,
Don't wait, 'twon't do,
Knockety-nick, nickety-knock,"—
Goes the kitchen clock.

Winters two have gone, and where is Milly ?
Spring has come again, and where is Billy ?
" Give me credit,
For I did it ;

Treat me kindly,
Mind you wind me.
Mister Billy,
Mistress Milly,
My—O, O—my,
By-by, by-by,
Nickety-knock, cradle rock,"—
Goes the kitchen clock.

COLLIE KELSO.

OLD Sideways, up! You harrow your track
As if every muscle had gone to rack;
Ho, yonder! see that chuck on the knoll?
Time was when you cropped 'em a-top the hole.
Ah, Collie, it 's over; you 've had your "day";
Death whistles, and you must hobble away.—
Fat chuck, you 're safe; keep on end where you are:
My Collie can't focus a barn so far.—
Brown Blessed; he 's old, and it hurts my soul
To see him blink tow'rd the game on the knoll.—
Still a touch of youth those old bones feel!
Down, plucky tyke, settle back to my heel;
Back, fellow, back! Death 's calling, I say;
He whistles you off another way.—

The rhythmic beating of that tail,
No wonder it, at last, must fail;

He thwacks it feebler, less and less—
Spent pendulum of pleasantness.
The humor of that postern motion,
Answering exact each passion, notion,
As though two hearts took turn about—
One thump inside, and then one out;
Pacific gesture (Mercy's plan)
Betwixt the animal and man!—
What! This the last time I shall bless
His poor old patient shagginess!——
Up, fellow, up! Kelso, I say——
Dead! Yes, the old dog 's had his day.

He 's happy in some sort of heaven;
With him that watched the sleepers seven,
And thousand sainted Towzers there,
He frisks it in the fields of air.

GRANNAM AND BLUE EYES.

"HOW many days since you were a child?"
The blue-eyed boy looked up and smiled—
"Grannam, the days since you were a child?"—
"Dear soul, I cannot tell:
Would I had lived them well."

"How many months since you were a child?"
He climbed her knee, and sweeter smiled—
"Grannam, the months since you were a child?"
"'Twere wiser far for me
To count the few to be."

"How many years since you were a child?"
Blue as the sky his eyes, so mild—
"Grannam, the years since you were a child?"—
"The years are not for me:
God give a-many to thee!"

Soft did she stroke his pretty brown head,
But not another word she said;
He waited long—not a word she said,
And Blue Eyes slipt, once more,
To his playthings on the floor.

THE WIDOW'S COMFORT.

GREEN is the grass upon the hill,
The wild-flow'r blossoms by the way ;
And never ran the meadow rill
More lightly than it runs, to-day :
But the rose-grown cottage
'Neath the poplars tall,
In the wide landscape is fairest of all.
There, a child looks into his mother's face,
And wondrous brightness fills the place,
As he says for her widow's comfort,—
"Mother, I have a plan :
When I am once a man,
I 'll walk in goodly company,
And you shall be a lady."

Paler the grass upon the hill,
The wild-flow'rs fail beside the way ;
And mournfully from wood and rill,
Float dirges for the summer day :
But the lowly cottage,
Where the sick boy lies,
Still lends the splendors of Paradise.
With his last look into the mother's face,
A fadeless glory fills the place ;
And he says for her widow's comfort,—
" Mother, you 'll come to me,
Wherever I may be,
Among the goodly company,
And you shall be a lady.'

SONNETS.

I.

MUSIC.

TAKE of the maiden's and the mother's sigh,
Of childhood's dream, and hope that age doth bless,
Of roses and the south wind's tenderness,
Of fir tree's shadow, tint of sunset sky,
Of moon on meadow where the stream runs by,
Of lover's kiss, his diffident caress,
Of blue eyes' yellow, brown eyes' darker, tress,
Of echoes from the morning bird on high,
Of passion of all pulses of the Spring,
Of prayer from every death bed of the Fall,

Of joy and woe that sleep and waking bring,
Of tremor of each blood-beat great and small;
Now, pour into the empty soul each thing,
And let His finger touch that moveth all.

II.

GROWN OLD WITH NATURE.

IF true there be another, better land,
A fairer than this humble mother shore,
Hoping to meet the blessèd gone before,
I fain would go. But may no angel hand
Lead on so far along the shining sand,
So wide within the everlasting door,
'Twill shut away this good, green world. *No more*
Of Earth!—Let me not hear that dread command.
Then must I mourn, unsoothed by harps of gold,
For sighing boughs, and birds of simple song,

For hush of night within the forest fold;
Yea, must bemoan, amid the joyous throng,
These early loves. The heart that has grown old
With Nature cannot, happy, leave her long.

III.

THE SKILFUL LISTENER.

THE skilful listener, methinks, may hear
The grass blades clash in sunny field together,
The roses kissing, and the lily, whether
It laugh or sigh low in the summer's ear,
The jewel dew-bells of the mead ring clear
When morning 's nearing in the sweet June weather,
The flocked hours winging, feather unto feather,
The last leaf wail at waning of the year.
Methinks, from these we catch a passing song,
(The best of verities, perhaps, but seem)
Hearing, forsooth, shy Nature, on her round,
When least she imagines it; birds, wood, and stream

Not only, but her silences profound,
Surprised by softer footfall of our dream.

IV.

DREAMS.

THE robber artists that in ambush wait
To follow in the train of sleep, like wind
At evening; ay, the color clan that bind
The pickets of the mind, and take its gate
By noiseless storm, and, merciless as fate,
Plunder its secret treasure,—what their kind,
Whence come they, how creep they the heart behind,
To work of mirth and murther dedicate?
A touch, and, lo, the airy canvas glows!
Here, coming bliss; there, woes of bygone years:
This scene too well we know; that, no man knows.
Confused, befooled by shifting hopes and fears,
At last we seem to grasp— The picture goes,
Fled are the workers in our smiles and tears.

THE PARTING OF ILMAR AND HAADIN.

PUT out thy torch, O watcher by the dead,
Unto the darkness give its own;
Silence and darkness—they alone
Must minister about this breathless bed;
Put out thy mocking torch, good watcher gray,
Thine old head cover; come away.—

And so I leave thee, Ilmar! That queen brow
Where diamond light were pale as mist,
I yield it up to Death, unkissed.
He took thee from me; thou 'rt his only, now:
No, no—I cannot lay on that still hand
Mine own, and thou not understand.

Mine was no little wingèd fantasy—
Gnat-passion of a summer day,
I loved not in the common way ;
Therefore must I accept this misery,
Must hug it close, feed me upon its pain,
No more than thou to smile again.

The spider can restore each riven thread,
The bee refill its empty comb ;
Alas ! the heart's imperial home,
Once plundered, goes for aye untenanted.
Henceforth I wander, homeless, helpless, lone,
Only my bitterness mine own.

The haggard night, with wet, disheveled hair,
On her black path at large, shall be
My mate ; the gesturing specter tree
Shall reach his arms to me through glitt'ring air ;
Friends will I make where, with despairing roar,
The baffled sea assaults the shore.

Wan as the bleachen kerchief smoothed around
Thy whiter neck, the realm of Death
Shall be my realm ; and my stopt breath
Shall be unheard as thine down in the ground.—
Mine own are deaf as that sweet sleeper's ears ;
Watcher, why speak when neither hears ?—

Thou art so meek ! Ah, why am I not so
Because thou art ?—It cannot be :
My tameless blood increasingly
Does heat me fierce as tiger crouchèd low,
Hard-spotted pard, that, glancing back the glare
Of sun fire, dapples all the air.—

Had I, O wind, your liberty, the sea
Should lift so wildly he must spray
The shining azure Death's own gray,
Put out the splutt'ring stars, to say for me
How black, how cold is all this world !—No, no ;
I must be calm. Lo, she is so !

Quench thy poor torch, good watcher. Death sleeps
sound:
A candle cannot cheat her night.
Do smiles strengthen the noon sun's light?
And shall we weep but to make wet the ground?
Old man, the gaping grave—didst ever note
The swallowed coffin choke his throat?

I tell thee she is Death's—Death's only, now:
Let us be gone. Come! Haadin's tear
Would be a raindrop on that bier,
His breath but wind against that bloodless brow.
Put out thy torch—ay, thou hast done it. All
Is dark—how dark!—Ilmar!—I—fall!

LIOLAN

AND now the call of "Liolan!"
Filled all the throngèd hall of judgment:
She had sinned as woman can
With fear of neither God nor man
Before her eyes.—"Summon two guardsmen
For the queen's maid, Liolan!"

Shorn of her order robe, nigh nude,
Slow up the long, wide aisle they led her.
Gently led the guardsmen rude,
Respectful sat the multitude:
Were she thrice guilty, none dare jeer at
Such a shape of womanhood.

As stands the solitary pine
She stood, unmoved, casting her shadow.
Choked, the king saw each curved line

He 'd drunk so oft in costly wine ;
His minions gazed with strained eyes fastened,
Spelled by that dark shape divine.

Only the queen stared cold as stone,
Rigid with pride, steel-hard with hatred:
Liolan had brought the throne
To shame, now let her life atone
For it. And this her lord had promised,
For her honor and his own.

Ay, such the king's high word—to screen
The gray-beard coward, not for honor:
He himself with touch unclean
Had stained the favorite of his queen,
Then pointed his polluted finger
At his son, famed Darragine.

Her heart by this young soldier won,
Bitter was Liolan's repentance
For the evil she had done.

A sinless life but now begun,
Lo, she was called to the hall of judgment—
And brave Darragine was gone.

To death the king doomed Liolan,
But he must mask it in compassion:
"Woman, merciful, we plan
To spare thy life if straight the man
That sinned with thee appear before us.
Bid him hither, Liolan."

Low to the king bowed Liolan,
Then slowly turned her toward the people:
Hear me! More I ask not than
This boon: If I timely bring the man,
See to it that I go forth scathless,
Not queen's maid, but—Liolan.

"Good people, meanest life is dear,
I know you would not take it lightly.
Grant one word in the king's ear;
Then, if he bid it, instant here

Shall be the one with me in evil."—
Pleased, the king bade her draw near.

Lithe as the supple panther can,
The queen's maid leaned over the monarch,
When a flash like lightning ran
The air through. "Look," cried Liolan,
Holding on high her studded dagger,
"Gentle friends, behold the man!"

That moment through the guarded door
Sprang in a band of swarthy troopers,
Darragine striding before:
"Your sabres! Strike him to the floor
That lifts a hand!—Ye know me, comrades;
Mark my words: I say no more."—

From out the hall walked Liolan,
While still the guilty king lay bleeding.
She had struck as woman can
When stung by faithless lust of man:
Honor itself to honest lover,
Safe passed plighted Liolan.

NATURE.

I.

THE MUSIC OF NATURE.

THE songs of Nature never cease,
Her players sue not for release.
In nearer fields, on hills afar,
Attendant her musicians are:
From water brook or forest tree,
For aye comes gentle melody,
The very air is music blent—
An universal instrument.
Beneath the voice of brook or bird,
There is another nigh unheard;
Does sound a moment drop the strain,
Then silence takes it up again,
Still sweeter—as a memory

Is sweeter than the things that be.
Pleased Nature's heart is alway young,
Her golden harp is ever strung;
Singing and playing, day to day,
She passes, happy, on her way.

II.

IN PRIMEVAL WOOD.

THIS deep, primeval wood—how still!
Lo, Silence here makes all his own;
Veiled shapes, with hands upon their lips,
Stand round about his darkened throne.

The patient pleading of the trees—
How deep it shames the soul's despair!
In supplication moveless, mute,
They keep their attitude of prayer.

III.

THE OLD TREE.

YON stricken monarch—lifeless form!—
No longer scorns the winter storm;
Tempest, at last, and length of days
Have mastered: lo! the king decays.

That shape so pitiful, once stood,
The Saul of his tall brotherhood;
From out his boughs, now ragged, sere,
Rang blithest songs of all the year.

Time was when gravely to his shade,
At noon, the lordlier cattle strayed;
When into his arms, at fall of night,
The shyest bird dropt from her flight.

Years since, I climbed that highest bough;
Only the hawk dare trust it, now.

Alas! I, too, was younger then:
We go together, oaks and men.

How like our own last reach of pray'r—
Those empty hands upheld in air,
Our own stern close with destiny
The struggle of the aged tree!

IV.

THE BEECHES BRIGHTEN EARLY MAY.

THE beeches brighten early May,
And young grass shines along her way;
Now, Joy first bares his sunny head,
Leaned over brook and blossom bed;
The smell of Spring fills all the air,
And wooing birds make music there.
Though naught of sound or sight does grieve,
From quiring morn to quiet eve,

My restless thoughts are forward cast:
This loveliness—it cannot last.
The merry field, the ringing bough,
Will silent be as tuneful now;
Chill, warning winds will hither roam,
The Summer's children hasten home:

That blue solicitude of sky
Bent over beauty doomed to die,
Ere long will, pitying, witness here,
The yielded glory of the year.

V.

SUMMER NOON.

A SUMMER noon is this,
The trees are breathless, every one:
Underneath the shadow is,
And overhead the sun.

Alone, the butterfly
  Lifts fitfully in lower air;
While the circling hawk on high
  Is all that 's moving there.

The brook—does it go by?
  Is it the water brook, which flows?
'Tis more like a line of sky,
  So quietly it goes.

VI.

TO A HUMMING-BIRD.

WITH a whirr and with a hover,
  Fickle, spinning blossom-lover,
Arab of the golden air,
Type of all that 's fleet and fair,
  Incarnate gem,
  Live diadem,

Bird-beam of the summer day,—
Whither on thy sunny way?

Hope too high—bid it forsake thee,
To her breast the rose would take thee;
Loveliest of lovely things,
Look on her, and fold thy wings:
Yea, take thy rest
Upon her breast,
So forget lost Paradise,
Star-bird fallen from happy skies.

Vanished!—Back I cannot call him,
Would not. Gentlest fate befall him!
Seeking that that is not here,
I must follow him with fear—
Swift passion-thought
In rapture wrought,
Plumed with azure and with fire
Of a burning heart's desire.

VII.

MONARCH OF THE NORTH.

UNBARRED, to-day, the arctic door,
The royal army marches forth;
Back! angry blasts ride on before
The hoary Monarch of the North!
The trumpets sound, the captains glance,
From crest to crest, from lance to lance;
Think ye to move his heart with prayer,
This gray old terror of the air?
He glories in the dying groan,
The shrunken flesh, the staring bone;
He gloats upon each pleading eye
As savagely he passes by.
Rouse! up! it is the warrior's day,
Wild hosts of Winter march this way!
Beware—again the trumpets blare!
Lo, answering powers crowd the air;

Dread horde invisible, they drive
Together, wrestle, fiercely strive,
In writhing masses downward leap,
Down—down the helpless valley sweep.
Onward they ravage; hark—the roar
From mountain top to ocean shore!
Aha, who bars the arctic door,
Who shall oppose his marching forth?
Back—back! mad blasts ride on before
Wroth Winter, Monarch of the North!

VIII.

ABREAST WITH OLD STORM.

"CROUCH by your cheery fire,
Ay, draw your bare bones nigher,
Dwarfed, shriveled son of a bloodless sire!"
So shouts Old Storm with a rousing roar
As he slams my door.

Hold! Not too fast, Old Storm:
Rather, to keep me warm
I will abroad. Here 's your mate, Old Storm—
Ready! I 'm with you for farthest shore;
Roar, grim braggart, roar!

Out on the frozen ground,
Whizzing from mound to mound,
I care no whit to what quarter bound;
In whirling leap to the tempest-tide,
Now for 't, side by side!

Vaulting the mountain's crown,
Swooping the valley down;
Among the steeples that peak the town,
Along the rivers, past wood and plain—
Storm, it is we twain!

Felling the tall trees fast,
All to the earth we 'll cast;
Men's houses, yea, their gray tombs, at last.

Lead on, Old Storm! Be it chasm or steep,
'Tis as one we leap.

On! for 'twill soon be day,
Let there be no delay;
On—on, Old Storm, not a moment stay!
Steer straight—you stagger—you slack your speed;
To your steps give heed.

Howl!—why, your voice grows thin!
March!—why, your knees give in!
Aha, Old Storm, shall the weakling win?
The earth and sea and the air are his:
'Tis in Genesis.

IX.

SUNRISE IN THE FOREST.

WITHIN this wood from man removed,
The satyrs, poised, with standing ears

Close listen, as in olden time;
With them all folk old poets say
Are nurtured 'neath the forest leaves.
Happy the heart here welcome made
By them, lapt in green quietude,
In cool maturity of shade:
Benignant beings, best of friends
I find these legendary shapes,
Taking the likeness thought may please.
Shy creatures! They will leave me, now;
Eastward their gentle faces turn.
A breath, fresh from the heights of morn,
Rouses the oak: through all his leaves
A tremor runs, and waking birds
Send on the thrill from hill to hill,
In a love-burdened burst of song.

X.

EVENING CLOUDS.

SLOW, changeful shapes, afar and lone,
Along the sea that makes no moan,
Like surf against a voiceless shore
The evening clouds roll up once more.

No sounds of sorrow or of pleasure
Accompany that stately measure :
Remote and lone, they 're rolling, white,
To land—the silent Land of Night.

Along, along the azure ocean,
On and on with mazy motion,
Thronging the fady heights of day,
They take their evanescent way.

EVENING SONGS.

XI.

IT is that pale, delaying hour
When Nature closes like a flower,
And on the spirit hallowed lies
The silence of the earth and skies.

The world has thoughts she will not own
When shades and dreams with night have flown;
Bright overhead, the early star
Makes golden guesses what they are.

XII.

A LIGHT lies here, a shadow there,
With little winds at play between;

As though the elves were delving where
The sunbeams vanished in the green.

The softest clouds are flocking white
Among faint stars with centres gold:
Slowly from daisied fields of night,
Heaven's shepherd fills his airy fold.

XIII.

NOW is Light, sweet mother, down the west,
With little Song against her breast:
She took him up, all tired with play,
And fondly bore him far away.

But his sister—she is singing still,
The merry Maiden of the Rill:
She follows happy waters after,
Leaving behind low, rippling laughter.

XIV.

BEHIND the hill top drops the sun,
The curled heat falters on the sand,
While evening's ushers, one by one,
Lead in the guests of Twilight Land.

The bird is silent overhead,
Below the beast has laid him down;
Afar the marbles watch the dead,
The lonely steeple guards the town.

The south wind feels its amorous course
To cloistered sweets in thickets found;
The leaves obey its tender force,
And stir 'twixt silence and a sound.

XV.

YON ragged cliff looks gentler down,
The twilight dims its grisly scars ;
Hushed earth awaits that second dawn,
The morning of the moon and stars.

Far creeping clouds—unguarded flock—
At pleasure rove the pathless sky ;
While watchful eyes of waters still,
Look up and count them, passing by.

Belated birds from paths of air,
Deep into closèd boughs have gone ;
Joy's smallest minstrels, all as one,
Alone their tireless pipes play on.

The nimble herds that take the hill,
The sober droves that crop the dell,
Worn beasts of toil, with creatures wild,
In universal shadow dwell.

I'VE SEEN THE SUN ON THE HILL TOP, THERE.

I 'VE seen the sun on the hill top, there,
Shine all as bright in a harlot's hair ;
I 've known no midnight black as the morn
An innocent babe to earth was born.

STRIVE ON, DOOMED SOUL.

STRIVE on, doomed soul, cross the sword with Fate,
Blind Time's award—set no store thereby ;
Th' unclean may creep to the Golden Gate,
The saint plunge, damned, from his place on high.

THE BLACK DAWN.

THERE was crying by night, and the winds were loud,
Worn women were working a burial shroud:
"She is gone," they said; "ay," they said, "she is gone!"
And the night winds moaned, and the hours went on.

But the morrow dawned clear, and the world shone bright,
No trace was there left of the dreadful night:
"Nay!" cried the lover, "the sun is long gone!
How the night winds sigh! Do the hours move on?"

I NEED NOT HEAR.

I NEED not hear each night wind loud
Go moaning down the wold,
I need not lift each bleachen shroud
From bodies white and cold

Call not, O naked, wailing Fall,
O man's unhappy race!
One drifting leaf—it tells me all,
'Tis all in one pale face.

TO HOPE.

AH, Hope, no more—no more
Deceive
That my heart may believe ;
For I know that the flake will follow
On the airy way of the swallow,
That the drift will lie where the lily blows,
And the icicle hang from the stem of the rose :
Ah, Hope—no more !

Nay, Hope, once more—once more
Beguile
With thine olden smile,
Though I know that the flake must follow
On the airy way of the swallow,
That the drift must lie where the lily blows,
And the icicle hang from the stem of the rose :
Ah, Hope—once more !

TO THE FALL WIND.

THAT I might borrow thy voice, Fall Wind,
To sing the sorrow of human kind ;
To speak for speechless tears,
For the hopes and fears
Of the wearisome years !

That I might borrow thy voice, Fall Wind,
To sing the sorrow of human kind :
Fall Wind, thy voice to grieve
For the hopes that deceive
And the hearts that believe !

ONE.

ONE day is gladdest of the year,
One loveliest when shadows near;
One cloud floats softest, lone and high,
One star is brightest of the sky.

One glory, when the winds are still,
Gleams keenest on the wintry hill;
One whitest lily, reddest rose—
None other such the summer knows.

Once come and gone—the one dear face,
Forever empty is its place;
But one far voice the lover hears,
Sounding across the waste of years.

TO ALICE.

I.

ONE lived whose wont it was, at eventide,
To lean upon a hoar rock's lichened side ;
There would she heed, not nature's voices clear,
But those beyond the hearing of the ear.

Her steadfast eyes looked softness through the vast,
Like moonlight in deep forest—lost, at last ;
She leaned : no thought can stiller be,
Not dream itself can rest more dreamingly.

Hearts are that open only to some high,
Pure realm, as blossoms open to the sky :
Such heart was hers. She came, and passed away
As goes the light at dying of the day.

She came and went, but in the sun and wind
Left faithfulest remembrancers behind:
There 's something of her in each breeze that blows,
Each color-change from April to the snows.

II.

JOY, bringing roses, found thee,
With fairest flowers crowned thee;
He promised all a lover may:
Thou sentest him away.

Sorrow no less admired thee,
For his dark breast desired thee;
He came with gift of great domain—
Alone, went back again.

Time in his triumph sought thee,
His rarest offerings brought thee;

He vowed to love thee aye and aye :
Still thou didst answer, "Nay."

Death, last, did wiser woo thee ;
He whispered softly to thee,
"Grief goeth, Joy and Time wax dim !"—
Thou gavest thyself to him.

III.

WHEN Death approached thee, Alice,
Life smote the olden foe ;

But when he kissed thee, Alice,
And thou didst answer low,

To his great love she yielded,
And, weeping, let thee go.

IV.

MOURNFUL Voice, haunting the quiet air,
What the burden of thy long despair?
What the whispered mystery of grief
Trembling ever on the summer leaf?

Sadder far than any song of tears,
Whose the music that my lone heart hears?
Wandering Sorrow, come and take thy rest;
Thou art welcome to mine empty breast.

—Oh, the passion breathed against my brow:
Human is this touch!—I know thee, now:
Thou dost bring me kisses Alice gave,
Reached thro' quickened grasses on her grave.

V.

THE years are seven
Since by brook and wood
We wandered, or in rapture stood ;
She, my own,
With my heart ingrown,
My love and I, her lover,
Beneath night's kindly cover :
Yea, the years are seven
Since we watched for the stars of heaven.

The years are seven ;
And, O traitor years !
We, fearing, trusted still, with tears,
Where is she
That was all to me?—
Beneath th' unlifted cover.
Lo, night to night goes over—

Are the years but seven
That have stricken the stars from heaven!

VI.

"NOT her," cried Life; "Alice is mine":
Gray Death smiled faintly, — "No, not thine."
And is Life strong? Yea, but Death stronger:
Soon they strove no longer.

Then Life fell weeping bitterly,
So sorely Death, pitying, drew nigh;
And, now, they sit in sunny weather,
By thy grave together.

Ay, Life and Death close friends have grown
Since thou didst die. I am alone;
With Life, with Death, I have no part.—
Oh, my heart—my heart!

SONG OF THE SLEEPERS.

THE mold is our mother;
She trusts no other.
Life must lay down
Both robe and crown;
Naught can keep
The fairest from sleep;
His labors shall close,
And the toiler repose.

The mold is our mother;
We have no other.
All lips shall be sealed,
The old hurts healed;
On the mother's breast
Shall her children rest.

As the day is bright,
So dark the night.
A glowing, a gloom,
The cradle, the tomb,
'Tis to come and go
Like the summer, the snow ;
Remembered, forgot,
We are—and are not.

The mold is our mother,
More kind than another :
With the gift of years
For smiling and tears,
Is a better, she saith—
The blessing of death.

Set the font by the urn ;
For the given return.
The fairest we know,
Has her bed below,

And the daughter of care
Finds quiet there.

We may laugh or may weep,
We have waked and must sleep ;
The young and the old
In the mother mold,
The blamed and the blest
On the mother breast.

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